

Integrating
The
Monorail

DESIGN GUIDELINES

DRAFT
Monorail Transit System
Design Guidelines

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City of Seattle

INTRODUCTION

What Are Design Guidelines?

Design guidelines intentionally do not prescribe specific design solutions; rather they set expectations for project proponents to meet in the design of new facilities. It is possible for a given design guideline to be met through any one of several design solutions. During the design review and permitting process, the City and project proponents jointly determine which design solution best meets the intent of the design guidelines overall. The design review and permitting processes both include opportunities for public review and input. Through this process, design guidelines ensure a consistent application of standards of design quality and performance while still allowing flexibility as the design progresses.

Inasmuch as the guidelines represent the broadest range of expectations, it is inevitable that some guidelines may appear to compete or conflict with one another. It is the user's responsibility to apply these general guidelines to specific locations and conditions, balancing expectations with project constraints and setting priorities as needed. Design guidelines do not function alone, but are a tool for capable professionals to use in assessing and ensuring design quality.

Purpose of Monorail Transit System Design Guidelines

The City of Seattle's monorail transit system design guidelines were developed to describe the City's urban design vision for monorail transit facilities and set the standards by which monorail transit facilities will be evaluated during the design and permitting process. The goal is it to ensure a superior design that is well integrated into the transportation system and the urban environment.

How the Monorail Transit System Design Guidelines Relate to Other Policies and Regulations

The monorail transit system design guidelines are part of the approval and permitting process that the City established after voters approved the creation of a city transportation authority, known as the Seattle Monorail Project (or "SMP,") with the power and authority to develop the Green Line project and plan for a citywide monorail transit system. The approval and permitting process includes:

- **Alignment Approval:** City Council approval of the horizontal and vertical alignment and locations of the monorail guideway, monorail transit stations, and monorail operations center;
- **Transit Way Approval:** City Council approval of an agreement granting non-exclusive use of certain City of Seattle streets and rights-of-way for the monorail, imposing certain conditions and mitigation requirements, and designation of those areas as a Monorail Transit Way;
- **Guideway Permits:** After approval of the alignment and Transit Way, the City's Director of Transportation is authorized to review and approve the design and final construction plans for the monorail guideway and related elements.
- **Station Permits:** After approval of the alignment and Transit Way, the City's Director of Planning and Development is authorized to review and approve the design and final construction plans for monorail transit stations, the monorail operations center, and related facilities.
- **Land Use Code and Street Use Code:** The City's Land Use Code and Street Use Code establish zoning, development regulations and design standards that are applied during guideway and station permitting.

- **Design Guidelines:** The Directors of Transportation and Planning and Development are authorized to impose reasonable conditions and waive certain development standards when necessary to achieve consistency with the monorail transit system design guidelines.
- **Design Review:** Monorail transit facilities are subject to review by the Monorail Review Panel (MRP) of the Seattle Design Commission. The MRP makes advisory recommendations to the Mayor, Council and Directors of Transportation and Planning and Development regarding design and planning issues.

Scope

The monorail transit system design guidelines address urban design and access issues for all monorail transit facilities, and for related improvements to streets and rights of way that are incorporated into the design and construction of the monorail transit system. Examples include:

- The elevated guideway and related columns/piers, emergency walkway, structural support elements such as C-bents, etc.
- Switches, turnbacks, and layover/holding tracks
- Systems structures such as power substations, etc.
- Individual stations and related public spaces, streetscape, and access improvements
- Areas underneath the guideway
- Other modifications and improvements to City streets and right-of-way

How the Guidelines Were Developed

The City has extensive experience developing and applying design guidelines for public and private projects beginning with the *City of Seattle Design Review Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings* (October 1993). Neighborhood-specific design guidelines were subsequently developed and adopted.

In 2000 and 2001 the City developed design guidelines for the Link light rail project, which are being used to review and permit that project in much the same way the City expects to use design guidelines for the Monorail. In addition, SMP developed a set of design principles and criteria to provide guidance to their architects and contractor. The MRP identified important urban design and access issues as part of their review of alignment planning and preliminary design of the Green Line project. Lastly, the City's station area planning process, which has drawn heavily from adopted neighborhood plans, has also provided a wealth of knowledge applicable to urban design issues for the Monorail; particularly the Background Reports in framing the key issues for stations and corridor typologies. Each of these documents has been a source of inspiration for the format, scope, process, and substance of the design guidelines for the Monorail and we are indebted to the authors for their contribution.

Organization of the Design Guidelines

The guidelines are organized in two primary sections: Station guidelines and Corridor guidelines. Within each section, the guidelines are grouped into categories including:

- **Corridor:** Location and design of guideway and related elements; access and circulation near the guideway; and overall streetscape/public realm design
- **Stations:** Site planning and architecture; streetscape; and access and connections

Within each category are broad guidelines by topic, each followed by a list of specific examples of how the guideline objective might be met or applied. Examples of topics include:

- **Corridor topics:** Pier design and location; location and design of system elements; vehicular, bike, transit, and pedestrian access; landscaping; and more
- **Station topics:** Site and context responsiveness; height, bulk, and scale; exterior finishes and materials; landscaping; street improvements; drop-off/pick-up and taxi zones; and more